



A \$6.5 million renovation project will replace the dilapidated platforms and shelters at the Cicero Metra station. ALEX GARCIA/TRIBUNE PHOTO

Cheer up, commuters, some relief is in sight

METRA: 24 stations to be renovated in state-funded effort

The run-down Metra station in Cicero is one of 24 stations that will be rehabbed starting next year. The renovations are part of a \$136 million, state-funded public works program that also will include three new Metra stations. The improvements, some long overdue, will help build ridership at a time when fares are increasing while revenues are dropping, Metra says. **PAGE 4**



Construction workers finish work on an inside lane of the Kennedy Expressway at Adams Street in Chicago. DAVID PIERINI/TRIBUNE PHOTO

KENNEDY: 3 ramps, 2 lanes to reopen downtown this week

Traffic tie-ups will be eased on a stretch of the Kennedy Expressway later in the week when three new ramps and one lane in each direction are scheduled to open, Jon Hilkevitch writes. The Kennedy ramp reconstruction project is months behind schedule and running \$3 million over its \$9.3 million budget, according to the Illinois Department of Transportation. **PAGE 7**

CAMPAIGN 2010

Candidate agree on way to fill empty seat

Senate hopefuls also say economy a priority

The Tribune on Monday starts a series of stories on issues in major races of the Feb. 2 primary, taking a look at the U.S. Senate contest.

Both Democratic and Republican candidates agree that in the future voters—not the governor—should choose the person to fill a Senate vacancy. The bipartisanship reflected the controversy over the appointment of Roland Burris to fill the seat when Sen. Barack Obama left the White House.

In November, Burris was admonished by the Senate Ethics Committee for providing “incorrect, inconsistent, misleading incomplete information” in how he got the job. He is not seeking election.

And in another bipartisan statement, both Democratic and Republican candidates said job creation and reviving the economy would be their top priorities. **PAGE 6**



HOLIDAY SURVIVAL WEEK

Trim the tree or trim the budget

Rather than opting for an across-the-board spending cut, many holiday-loving households are picking and choosing where to scrimp and save in some parts of their budgets so they can splurge on something special. **PAGE 10**

CHICAGOLAND

Disabled teens more likely to miss school

A report by the Consortium on Chicago School Research found that Chicago public high school students with learning and emotional difficulties had more absences and poorer academic performance than students without disabilities. **PAGE 8**

Miscarriage grief can haunt pregnancies

Eric and Stephanie Nash of Downers Grove care for their twins Caroline, left, and Jack, who were conceived after the Nashes had suffered two miscarriages. PHIL VELASQUEZ/TRIBUNE PHOTO



By Joel Hood
TRIBUNE REPORTER

Two miscarriages in three months had taken such a heavy toll on Stephanie Nash that when she became pregnant again that summer an old familiar fear crept back in.

Twins, the doctor said, on the day of the ultrasound.

That's when the tears began to fall, and Nash realized that joy and heartache are sometimes one and the same.

“I just thought, ‘I don’t know if I can go through this again,’” Nash

said. “I was grateful to be pregnant again, but I also felt like I’d been down this road before.”

Unable to resolve her conflicting emotions, Nash joined Still Missed, a support group for “subsequent parents”—women who’ve become pregnant while still grieving for children who died in the womb. The group, which meets monthly out of the Adventist Hospital network in suburban Chicago, is one of the few of its kind to help women deal with that often awkward and painful period after a miscarriage.

Please turn to **Page 11**

WEATHER



See Tom Skilling's forecast on the back of Live! **SECTION 3**

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Add a holiday bow to former traffic knot

Downtown Kennedy to see 3 ramps, 2 lanes reopen by week's end

An especially wicked traffic bottleneck should start to clear later this week on the busy downtown stretch of the **Kennedy Expressway**, when three newly constructed ramps and one lane in each direction are set to reopen.

It's a cheerful holiday season construction update for commuters who have complained since summer of traffic being affected clear back to the **Edens Expressway**, which created its own logjam for drivers a year ago when that highway was resurfaced through the northern suburbs.



Jon Hilkevitch
Getting Around

Adding to the pain, the Kennedy ramp reconstruction project is months behind schedule and running \$3 million over its \$9.3 million budget, according to the **Illinois Department of Transportation**. The original completion date was Nov. 15, but work will not wrap up until spring, officials said.

The low point was reached on Oct. 14 when pavement near **Adams Street** erupted due to a construction mishap in an abandoned freight tunnel below. Consequently, two highway lanes were shut down for most of the day on the section of the Kennedy that handles more than 300,000 vehicles daily.

But now, the semi-completion of Kennedy work to improve flow and reduce accidents means that all **Loop-area** entrances and exits will be open outbound, or westbound, from roughly the **Eisenhower Expressway (Interstate Highway 290) Circle Interchange** to the **Hubbard's Cave** tunnel.

It marks a welcome expansion of access points to the highway for drivers heading out of downtown.

Specifically, the westbound Kennedy entrance ramps at **Jackson Boulevard** and **Adams Street** and the inbound, or eastbound, entrance at **Madison Street** are scheduled to reopen by Friday, weather permitting, according to IDOT. In addition, all four lanes in each direction will be back in service by week's end with the return of the left lane adjacent to the median from **Van Buren** to **Lake** streets, officials said.

Meanwhile, three eastbound exit ramps — at **Adams**, **Jackson** and **Monroe Street** — will remain closed for reconstruction through winter, IDOT said, adding that those ramps are scheduled to open in spring.

"Until the eastbound exits reopen, Loop-bound drivers can use the **Lake** or **Randolph** street exits



On the downtown Kennedy Expressway, all four lanes in each direction will be back in service by week's end. Three ramps also will reopen this week, but others will stay shut till spring. The ramp reconstruction project is running \$3 million over its \$9.3 million budget, the state says. **DAVID PIERINI/TRIBUNE PHOTO**

Cruising Chicago area

John Hilkevitch takes you through the ins and outs of commuting at chicagotribune.com/hilkevitch

instead," said Jacek Tyszkiewicz, IDOT project implementation engineer in the Chicago region.

Instead of encountering three eastbound exit ramps in succession, when the work is completed, drivers will have the option to use a single ramp to leave the Kennedy; the ramp then will split into individual exits at **Adams** and **Jackson**. Monroe will remain separate.

Similarly, the redesign of the Kennedy's center-entrance "suicide-merge" ramps was intended to boost safety by extending the merge pattern into traffic on the Kennedy, giving drivers more time and better sight lines to enter the expressway, officials said.

About a half-dozen of the originally 20-plus Kennedy ramps west of the **Loop**, some spaced as close as a block apart, have been eliminated in the last five years.

"It gave us more room to provide longer tapers and longer ramps to allow vehicles to merge into traffic with longer gaps to enter," Tyszkiewicz said.

Even with safety improvements introduced in the last five years, there still is at least one accident each day on the roughly mile-long section of the expressway, IDOT officials said.

"The project really was neces-

sary to alleviate what probably was the most substantial safety problem we had on our interstate system in regard to the number of crashes," said Tom Murtha, a senior planner with the **Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning**.

The easing of congestion could not come soon enough for drivers. Attorney Richard Paull has resorted to trying different ways to work from his home in **Highland Park** to the **Cook County courthouse** at **26th Street** and **California Avenue**.

"The Kennedy has backed up worse than usual in the morning from the **Loop** to the **Edens Junction** since shortly after the project began," Paull said. "It was noticeable from the moment the project started, and it forced me out of my regular commuting routine."

Murtha, who has created computerized congestion scans of Chicago-area expressways (see cmap.illinois.gov/scans), said the Kennedy ramp work may have exacerbated the congestion problem. But it's difficult to quantify because traffic gridlock already was very bad.

"We typically see congestion as far north as **Dundee Road** or **Lake-Cook Road** on an average day regardless of this project," Murtha said.

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Kennedy Expressway ramp construction update

SCHEDULED TO OPEN BY END OF THE WEEK

- Eastbound entrance from Madison
- Westbound entrance from Adams
- Westbound entrance from Jackson

Eastbound and Westbound left lane from **Lake** to **Van Buren**

SCHEDULED TO OPEN IN THE SPRING

- Eastbound exit to Monroe
- Eastbound exit to Adams
- Eastbound exit to Jackson

PERMANENTLY CLOSED

- Westbound exit to Monroe



SOURCES: IDOT, Google Earth, ESRI, TeleAtlas

TRIBUNE



Quinn taps former Park District president for state tollway board

By **John Byrne**
TRIBUNE REPORTER

Gov. Pat Quinn has named a former Chicago Park District president to serve on the state tollway board.

Maria Saldana's appointment, which was announced Saturday, is for a 4-year term on the 11-member board that sets policy for tollway

operation, maintenance and construction. She joins the Illinois State Toll Highway Authority board at a time of transition. In recent years, the agency has seen turnover on the board and in its executive director position.

In addition, federal authorities have alleged that days before Gov. Rod Blagojevich announced a \$1.8 billion tollway construction pro-

gram in October 2008, he privately tipped a fundraiser to the plan and said he expected a major highway contractor to raise \$500,000 for his campaign fund.

Also, the firm that the Blagojevich administration worked with to renovate the tollway oases has been having financial problems.

Saldana, a Chicago investment banker, has served under Mayor

Richard Daley in various capacities. Daley tapped Saldana as park board president in 2002. She succeeded Michael Scott after the mayor named Scott to head the Chicago Board of Education the first time. Saldana was at the Park District until 2007.

Saldana also worked under Daley as the city's chief assistant corporation counsel from 1989 to 1997,

where she oversaw the Law Department division responsible for financial aspects of tax-increment financing and bond issues.

Saldana now is the senior vice president for public finance at Duncan-Williams Inc., a regional investment banking firm, according to the governor's office.

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